

EACC NEWS

The East Asia Christian Conference is an organ of continuing fellowship and co-operation among the Churches and Christian Councils in East Asia.

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PEACE FOR INDO-CHINA - AT LAST?

BANGKOK - For the Indo-chinese people, even reckoning the war years only from the time of the breakdown of Franco-Vietnamese negotiations in December 1946 (i.e. leaving aside the Japanese occupation from 1940 to the end of the second world war), a quarter of century has passed without the people of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos knowing what it means to 'live in peace'. It is all the more reason to welcome the news of the nine-point peace agreement for this war-torn region.

According to the latest figures from US-backed pacification programme's computers, the government of South Vietnam controlled 90.1 p.c. of the 19.1 million people at the end of September with 7.2 p.c. in contested areas and 2 p.c. dominated by the north Vietnamese and Vietcong.

While according to the agreement, the sovereignty and neutrality of Cambodia and Laos will be recognized by all parties in the Vietnam war, there is uncertainty whether Cambodian President Lon Nol's government could survive a ceasefire or be forced to submit to a coalition with the communist Khmer Rouge. While acknowledging for the first time the existence of the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia's own Vietcong-like opposition, officials have still refused to negotiate directly with them. The Cambodian Premier also had refused to deal with supporters of deposed Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the ex-chief of state, now in exile in China.

In Cambodia recent official estimates are that the communist-led forces, primarily local, Khmer Rouge, control about 85 p.c. of the countryside and 55 p.c. of the 7 million people.

Laos is the most remote and perhaps the most complex of Indo-china's war-ridden areas. It has two wars, one between the Royal Government, and the north Vietnamese and their Pathet Lao clients in north-central Laos, the other along the Ho Chi Minh trail - which is essentially an extension of the war in Vietnam. It is estimated that as much of half of Laos is controlled or dominated by the Communist side.

Prince Souvanna Phouma, Laotian Premier, called for multilateral aid for all of Indo-china to repair war damage and provide a decent living standard for the Indo-chinese people. On 25th October Pathet Lao and Prince Souvanna Phouma's government held peace talks at the Laotian capital. It was the first substantive series of peace talks since the Geneva Accords of 1964.

Meanwhile USA, Britain, France, USSR, People's Republic of China, South and North Vietnam have reportedly agreed to participate in the International Conference on Vietnam. Japan, where participation in the Conference was reportedly objected to by North Vietnam, had offered to assist in the reconstruction of Vietnam through soft Yen loans or a relevant economic policy.

THAI CHURCH HOLDS COUNSELLING SEMINAR - OCTOBER 29

CHIENGMAI - Crystal Springs Student Center in Chiangmai is the site of the Family Life and Counselling Seminar from October 29 to November 4. The seminar is jointly sponsored by the Church of Christ in Thailand and the Seven Fountains Catholic Student Center with some subsidy from the East Asia Christian Conference. Topics to be discussed include: Pastoral Counselling, Principles of Counselling, Responsible Parenthood, Sexual Ethics, and Youth and Social Change. Twenty-three Thai participants - including medical personnel, pastors, psychologists and professors - will share their problems and experiences in various realms of counselling.

The concept of counselling is relatively new to the church in Thailand. Most professionals find themselves involved in counselling related to their work and are unsure of their role as "counsellor". Too often, the professional, in his attempts to counsel, "gives advice" to the individual, rather than helping the individual to solve his own problems. According to Chairman Reverend Somchart Cha-umthong, the purpose of counselling services is the remove "masks" to find the real individual and to aid him in helping himself.

Reverend Cha-umthong is pastor of the Second Church in Bangkok and was trained in the field of counselling in the United States. He sees the aim of the seminar to be to introduce counselling as a new field in church work. The seminar is designed to provide the time and place for counsellors in Thailand in many different disciplines to share their various experiences. In preparation for the seminar, each participant was requested to submit a case study in his field for presentation during the seven-day discussions. These case studies will cover a wide range of issues including personality problems, mental health, and juvenile court cases. Along with these case studies, other activities are planned. Films will be shown, and the group of participants will visit a Mental Health Institution as well as an orphanage. After each event, the seminar will divide up into smaller groups, for discussion. At the close of the conference, each participant will be awarded a certificate.

Hopefully, this seminar will be followed by other similar meetings in the future, and that as a result of insights gained during this week, the participants will share what they have learned with others involved in the field of counselling. Reverend Cha-umthong is considering the possibility of setting up Counselling Centers in Thailand including a unit in Suicide Prevention.

BISHOP KOH PASSES AWAY

KUALA LUMPUR - Reverend Roland Koh, age 64, died October 6 at 5:30 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania after a sort illness. He was chairman of the EACC Study Committee on Church and Society and International Affairs.

In 1945, Reverend Koh joined the Faculty at Union Theological College in Canton as a lecturer, remaining there until 1947. On June 11, 1958, he was consecrated Assistant Bishop of Singapore in Canterbury Cathedral. In 1961, he was appointed Lord Bishop Suffragen in Kuala Lumpur. He was transferred, to Jesselton in 1965, where he remained until 1970, when he was again transferred this time to West Malaysia. A Memorial Service for Reverend Koh was held on Saturday, October 21 at 5:30 p.m. in Singapore.

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EACC SOUTH ASIA YOUTH AND LAY LEADERS CONSULTATION

KUALA LUMPUR - "Living with Change" will be the theme of the EACC South Asia Youth and Lay Leaders' Consultation October 25 through November 14 at the Y.M.C.A. in Kuala Lumpur. A total of 22-25 participants under the age of 35 are expected to be present representing Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Australia and New Zealand.

Participants were chosen on the basis of their involvement in denominational or ecumenical youth and lay ministry as, or with intentions to be, professional workers in urban and rural ministry, academies, community organization, education, student counselling and industrial ministries. To assist the participants in their discussions some professionals have been invited to participate as leaders in the consultation.

In preparation for the discussions, each delegate is required to write a situation paper to include information concerning the youth population, their problems and activities in rural, urban and industrial areas; educational and physical facilities for their wholesome development; church training facilities and activities which are geared toward development and employment of youth; and moral and spiritual development of youth. These papers are to be presented at the consultation.

The programme itself has been left unstructured to give participants the opportunity to design their own discussions along the lines of the background materials sent to them previously. The schedule, however, does include at least four days of visitation to "real life-changing situations" in the Singapore area and throughout Malaysia. A steering committee will be formed from delegates and will include a chairman; the Executive Secretary for the consultation, Larry C. Y. Cheah; and a representative from each national delegation.

SINGAPORE VENUE OF SPECIAL ECUMENICAL FUND REVIEW

SINGAPORE - On the 8th of this month a committee of nine, made up of EACC officers and selected churchmen in different parts of the region, will meet at Singapore to undertake its periodical review of the operations of the Special Ecumenical Fund (SEF) launched by the EACC in July 1968, with a target of US\$ 300,000.00 for some 55 experiments in the region. "A strategic Christian approach to a whole continent" was an oft repeated concern behind the emergence of the EACC as a regional ecumenical body. The aim of SEF was to help identify Christian efforts which were not necessarily important from the point of view of one nation but strategic in terms of the total region. Crisis in cities, hunger and underdevelopment, university missions, and lay training were among those listed as the concerns which would validly secure the support of SEF.

EACC officers, selected churchmen from different parts of the region and consultants will study the programme made in fulfillment of the purpose of the Fund, and formulate plans for the future. Rt. Reverend Chiu Ban It, Acting Chairman of the EACC will be presiding over the meeting and reports on the operations of the Fund in the three sectors of the region will be received. Dr. M.M. Thomas of India, a member of the committee and chairman of WCC Central Committee, will be represented by Mr. T.K. Thomas, his proxy from the same church and country.

CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF NCC OF INDONESIA MEETS

SUKABUMI - "Life would have been much simpler if Jesus Christ had not died on the cross," declared U Kyaw Than, General Secretary of the EACC, as he attended a meeting of the Central Committee of the National Council of Churches of Indonesia at Sukabumi a fortnight ago. Continuing, he said: "Because Christ had bound us together as members of His Body - there is the obligation for churches in Indonesia to take into account the implications of their own actions and decisions for their neighbouring churches and churches abroad." U Kyaw Than was making a point about the challenges of interchurch relations, and the far-reaching repercussions of Christian obedience in any given country. The Central Committee of the NCC of Indonesia was held from the 16th to the 21st of October with some ninety participants from forty-two member churches scattered throughout the nation. The meeting divided into sections on Unity and Witness; Service and Development; Education and Communication; and a section dealing with priorities in programme execution.

"Parapaton Agung" church in Central Java was accepted by the Central Committee as the forty-second member cooperating within the fellowship of the National Council of Churches.

Five working groups considered the different concerns presented in plenaries, each dealing respectively with theological education, relations with churches abroad, and ecumenical bodies, particularly the East Asia Christian Conference and the World Council of Churches. The NCC in Indonesia clearly expresses, in the constitution, its purpose and goal as the waiting upon God together to bless in time the emergence of one Christian church in the nation, despite obstacles to unity due to geographical, tribal and dogmatic differences or distinctions noticeable among the churches scattered throughout the main and smaller island.

Among the officers, members and staff of the NCC of Indonesia attending the meeting at Sukabumi were many who continue to play their role in international and world church bodies. Statements and papers submitted for reference and work of the committee included, among others, those by Dr. J. Abineno, the Executive Resident; Dr. S. Nababan, the General Secretary; Dr. T.B. Simatupang, one of the residents; Dr. F. Ukur, a dyak theologian and Ephorus Sihombing of the Batak Church. Consultants from North America, Europe, Asia and WCC were also in attendance.

BRIEFS

- ... The United Church of Christ in Japan announces the appointment of Reverend George Hanabusa to the post of Acting General Secretary of it's 25th Executive Committee, beginning November 1. He is replacing Toru Takakura, who is moving to another position within the Church. Mr. Hanabusa is well known as the Kyodan's Executive Secretary of the Committee for Ecumenical Ministries, and will continue in that capacity as well until the convening of the next Kyodan General Assembly.
- ... The General Conference of the Methodist Church is scheduled to meet November 13-19 to discuss Petitions to General Conference. The deadline for petitions - addressed to Secretary of Petitions, General Conference (Rev. Robert Foster), 23-B Coleman Street, Singapore 6, Republic of Singapore - was October 14.